

Public Health Association of British Columbia (PHABC)



Newsletter - September 2009

President's Report

The provincial election and the recent budget have provided an opportunity for PHABC to put forward its agenda for healthy public policy. In spite of our efforts and those of our close partners such as the BC Healthy Living Alliance, Health Officers Council and the Poverty Reduction Coalition, the provincial government has not addressed some of the most pressing determinants of health. Short term decisions seem to be the order of the day. Unfortunately, these decisions will have long term consequences. Healthy public policies that address the social determinants of health are an investment in the future not simply a cost to this year's budget. Without these investments, society can expect continued sky rocketing costs for health care, prisons and social welfare. Cutting back these upstream programs may save money in this election cycle, but will create even higher costs down the road. We have a choice. Income security, safe and affordable housing, literacy and positive early childhood experiences. Or crime, mental illness, unsafe communities, homelessness – and the costs associated with them.

While it is easy to get discouraged that the message of public health is not being heard, there is cause for optimism as the voices calling for action on the social determinants of health is growing and not just the voices of the “usual suspects” such as the WHO, the Senate Sub-Committee or Canada's Chief Public Health Officer. But locally as well. For example, some in the business community are unhappy with the government's approach to minimum wage policy. And the widespread public concern over changes to arts funding clearly showed the value placed on building vibrant communities where diversity and social inclusion are nurtured.

PHABC will continue to play its part. We are helping decision-makers and others understand what works in addressing health inequities through our research, project work, educational sessions and advocacy. The November PHABC Conference will be an exciting culmination of our work on this over the past year. Our ideas are guided by the Ottawa Charter a roadmap put forward

by public health in 1986 to address the determinants of health. We need to translate this into a provincial population health promotion strategy that brings together government, business and civil society. It would lead to a comprehensive approach to the social determinates, including poverty reduction, drawing upon the best policies and practices from across sectors.

PHABC will continue to put forward this vision and encourage actions provincially and locally. Our political establishment has been ignoring the lessons of the Ottawa Charter for the last decade and we can not expect to reverse this overnight. Even small steps are important to reduce health inequities and enable everyone to achieve their potential.

Ted Bruce
President, Public Health Association of BC

PHABC discussions with the Public Health Agency of Canada re: First Nations, Métis and Inuit Public Health Policy Framework

The president of PHABC recently met with representatives from the Public Health Agency of Canada to discuss the First Nations, Metis and Inuit Public Health Policy framework. Discussions lead to the identification of existing challenges, emerging priorities, and potential solutions.

Some of the challenges identified included: capacity within communities to become more self-determining, access to programs, inconsistent or inadequate funding, health literacy, communication barriers for communities in remote areas, and violence in communities. Discussions also identified the importance of capacity building as a competency area and the value for PHAC to build the cultural competency of its own workforce.

At the end of the discussions some emerging priorities and solutions were the importance of using an inequities lens in policy making, long term funding that promotes self determination and cultural competency training. Both PHABC and PHAC could play a role in health literacy and cultural competency education. PHABC also suggested that PHAC should play a role in helping other departments understand the importance of the social determinants of health in their work.

PHABC Website Update

PHABC wishes to thank our partners for their support and commitment to the PHABC website. As you know the PHABC website utilizes a Content Management System (CMS) to build and consolidate a network for public health across the province. The CMS facilitates the exchange of ideas and knowledge to enhance capacity within the public health community.

Over the past four years, PHABC has established a solid “online” audience and our viewership has grown steadily to its current user level of 150,000 page views per month. The summer months were particularly outstanding as we averaged over 212,000 page views per month. The growth of the site is in large part due to the support your organizations have provided. We expect the site will continue to grow in popularity as we add new content and resources. To this end, we anticipate launching two exciting new food security modules/sub sites in the next few months.

PHABC will continue to endeavour to improve the site with your support. If you have comments or suggestions on ways to improve the site your feedback is always welcome at: execdir@phabc.org.

PHABC Project Updates

Core and Technical Competencies for Public Health in BC

The Core and Technical Competencies for Public Health in BC will contribute to ensuring that the public health workforce has the right mix of people equipped with the right mix of competencies, in the right place and at the right time for the effective and efficient delivery of public health in BC. The project is a partnership between the Public Health Association of BC, the BC Academic Health Council, the BC Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport, and the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC). PHABC is managing the project, with funding from the PHAC and the BC Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport.

In fiscal 2008/09 the project identified the core and technical competencies most critical to implementing the BC Ministry of Health [Framework for Core Functions in Public Health](#) and to identify competency profile gaps.

In fiscal 2009/10 the project will implement processes to meet the competency profile gaps identified in the needs assessment, recommend appropriate education response, identify the education/training opportunities that facilitate

the development of competencies throughout the BC public health sector, and develop tools for education and workforce planning.

Methodology

1. Review project scope and deliverables with stakeholders.
2. Include stakeholders in the design and delivery of the project through regular advisory and steering committee meetings.
3. Verify additional competencies vis a vis national competencies and discipline specific competencies.
4. Document training opportunities that develop core competencies.
5. Identify training opportunities that develop the competency gaps identified in the needs assessment (phase I).
6. Survey policy makers and public health leaders.
7. Categorize existing systemic supports and obstacles to public health workforce training.
8. Create resources for the public health workforce to assess their own competency levels.
9. Provide knowledge translation regarding network mechanisms.
10. Share results with stakeholders and the public health workforce.
11. Make recommendations for fiscal year 2010/11.

Healthy Foods Initiative: Farm to School Project

PHABC's Farm to School program funded through the BC Healthy Living Alliance aims to prevent childhood obesity through improved local food security. This means increasing access to fresh, locally-grown, nutritious, safe and culturally appropriate foods in a sample of BC schools. Sixteen schools are operational and more than 6,000 school aged children residing in communities from Fernie to Fort St. John will have the opportunity to access fresh local fruits and vegetables on school premises.

PHABC is developing A New Crunch in School Lunch: The BC Farm To School Salad Bar Guide. The resource will be available on the PHABC website some time in the next few weeks. We are also exploring the possibility of conducting regional workshops to disseminate the guide and planning a fall conference to acknowledge and celebrate successes, to share learning's, and to inspire the support and development of additional programs.

For more information please visit the farm to school website at www.phabc.org/farmentoschool.

Governance Committee

The Registered Copy of the new Constitution and Bylaws has been made available to all members on the PHABC website. Standards for the Nominations and Elections process have been developed and reviewed by the BOD. These standards will complement section 5.0 Nomination and Election Section in the PHABC Bylaws. A final copy of the Standards will be submitted to the BOD for their approval at the September meeting.

A Call for Nominations was issued on September 2, 2009. The following positions are available for nomination and election: President, Vice –President, Secretary and 5 Directors-at-Large. The Call for Nomination will close on September 28th, 2009. Elections will commence on October 13th and close on November 3, 2009. Successful candidates will be announced at the AGM and posted on the website following that meeting.

Sandra McKenzie, Chair
Governance Committee

Membership Committee

The Membership Committee is focusing its efforts this year on reviewing the membership and renewal processes for the members who joined PHABC through the on line community of practice project funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada in 2005. This project is currently in process. If you would like to assist in this project or other PHABC membership activities please contact Barbara Crocker (barbara.crocker@vch.ca) or Maureen Rowlands (mrowlands@hsf.bc.ca).

Policy, Advocacy, and Research Committee

As part of its mandate, the Public Health Association of BC is committed to advocating for healthy public policies. On April 29th, 2009 the BC Healthy Living Alliance and the Public Health Association of BC were pleased to host a Candidates' Forum on population health. The purpose of this forum was to engage the 2009 BC Provincial Election Candidates in a dialogue around how to best address chronic diseases, promote wellness and invest in the health of future generations. Participants welcomed candidates Dr. Margaret MacDiarmid (BC Liberals), Damian Kettlewell (BC Green Party) and Janice Harris (BC NDP). Important discussions emerged in the areas of healthy childhood, health inequities, and prevention and promotion. To learn more visit <http://www.phabc.org/modules.php?name=Headlines>

Over the coming year, PHABC will continue to focus on advocating for policies and programs to reduce health inequities as identified in the 2008 resolution: www.phabc.org/files/2008-01_Resolution_on_Inequities.pdf. This includes our ongoing support to the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition and their call for a Provincial Poverty Reduction Plan. For more information, visit: <http://bcpovertyreduction.ca/>

In addition, we will work to ensure that the opportunities for prevention and promotion as a tool to ensure the sustainability of our health system are not lost. We would encourage you to disseminate 'The 6% Solution' which outlines the benefits of investing in prevention and health promotion: http://www.phabc.org/files/PHABC_Sun_Page.pdf Take the time to send a note to your local paper or MLA on the importance of prevention and promotion activities.

PHABC is also working to ensure that advocacy opportunities will be present at the upcoming PHABC conference. We look forward to seeing you there.

Daryl Quantz
Chair, Policy, Advocacy, and Research

Capacity-Building Committee

Several new members joined the Capacity-Building Committee in 2009. The current members are: Paola Ardiles; Marlene Barber; Ted Bruce; Michelle Burtnyk; Simon Carroll; Steve Corber; Dee Duncan; Louis Giguere; Gen Grigg; Theresa Hermary; Kim Jensen; Svetlana Kishchenko; Paulette Lacroix; Katrina Ludwig; Marit Main; Denise McKay; Warren Michelow; Marina Niks; Patricia O'Hagan; Marilyn Ota; Irv Rootman; Breann Specht; and Kelly White. Irv Rootman and Marina Niks agreed to Co-chair the Committee.

The Committee reviewed its Terms of Reference and Strategic Plan and agreed that its operational work should be done through sub-committees and that its main role should be to oversee the work of these committees and that it should focus on medium- to long-term planning related to Capacity Building.

To these ends, the Committee established a sub-committee to plan the 2009 Conference as well as one to plan the 2009 Workshop and heard reports from these committees at its meetings. The Workshop took place on May 6 with ten sites connected by video-conference. Speakers were Dr. Cory Neudorf, Dr. John Millar, Diane Bissenden, and Joanne Bays. Their presentations are on the PHABC

website <http://www.phabc.org/>. The Conference will occur on November 23 and 24 and will include a community event on the first evening. Additional information can be found in this newsletter and on the PHABC website.

In addition to overseeing the sub-committees, the Committee reviewed existing and proposed capacity building work of the Association including the Core Competencies Project, a proposal to develop a Public Health Workforce Training Centre, and proposals for workshops on Evaluation in Public Health and on Training for International Practitioners.

Any member who is interested is welcome to join the Capacity-Building Committee or to suggest ideas and opportunities related to building capacity for public health in British Columbia. If you wish to do so, contact Irv Rootman at rootman@telus.net or Marina Niks at Niksm@douglas.bc.ca.

Irv Rootman and Marina Niks
Co-Chairs, PHABC Capacity-Building Committee

**“Action Towards Reducing Health Inequities”
Public Health Association of BC Conference and
Annual General Meeting
November 23-24, 2009
Plaza 500 Hotel, Vancouver, BC**

There is abundant evidence that widespread inequities in health exist in British Columbia and a growing body of evidence on promising and best practices to address them. This conference will build on efforts to date and will focus on moving beyond dialogue to new and innovative forms of action aimed at reducing these inequities.

Join us to learn more about:

- Best and promising practices and policy options for reducing health inequities and the evidence base to assist in building a strong case for action.
- Practical applications of the ‘equity lens’ and valuable insights from multiple sectors including Education, Justice, NGOs and the private sector.
- Using media advocacy effectively.
- BC core public health functions and opportunities for progress in addressing health inequities.

- Research and funding opportunities and much more!

Conference program highlights include:

- Senator Wilbert Keon, Chair of the Canadian Senate Subcommittee on Population Health will set the stage by focusing on actions that the Canadian government can take in collaboration with others recommended by the Subcommittee.
- Dr. Penny Ballem, City Manager for the City of Vancouver will join other government leaders in speaking to what governments can - and are doing - to reduce health inequities.
- Professor Lawrence Wallack, an international expert on media advocacy will speak on how we get the message out to public through the media.
- Public health researchers and practitioners will present papers that identify innovative efforts to address health inequities by public health and other sectors.
- Workshops will provide tools and skills that practitioners need to address the issue of health inequities more effectively.
- A Public Forum on “Urban Poverty and the Public Health” will take place in conjunction with the Conference and will feature Dr. Patty Daly, Chief Medical Health Officer for Vancouver Coastal Health, Seth Klein, BC Director for the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Dr. Evan Adams, Aboriginal Health Physician Advisor, Office of the Provincial Health Officer and Housing Advocate Judy Graves.

For the complete conference program and to register go to www.phabc.org. The deadline for early registration is fast approaching. Register now to save money!